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#4

# I HEART SKULL CRUSHER!





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WRITTEN BY  
**JOSIE CAMPBELL**

ILLUSTRATED BY  
**ALESSIO ZONNO**

COLORS BY  
**ANGEL DE SANTIAGO**

LETTERS BY  
**JIM CAMPBELL**

MAIN COVER BY  
**ALESSIO ZONNO**

VARIANT COVERS BY  
**MICHAEL DIALYNAS  
ALESSIO ZONNO**

FOC REVEAL & UNLOCKABLE VARIANT COVERS BY  
**ALESSIO ZONNO**  
WITH COLORS BY **ANGEL DE SANTIAGO**

DESIGNER  
**GRACE PARK**

ASSISTANT EDITOR  
**KENZIE RZONCA**

EDITORS  
**DAFNA PLEBAN &  
ELIZABETH BREI**

**I HEART SKULL-CRUSHER! CREATED BY JOSIE CAMPBELL & ALESSIO ZONNO**

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WELCOME  
BACK TO

GROUP  
A

WE'VE MADE  
IT THROUGH THE  
FIRST ROUND. BUT NOW  
IT'S TIME FOR PODUNK  
LIL' TEAM TO  
FACE...

TO BE  
HERE

PODUNK  
LIL' TEAM







BE  
HOMES  
THE  
BOMBERS

...THE  
BOMBERS!

THINK  
ON YOUR  
SINS...

...AND REPENT  
WITH YOUR  
LIFE!

IT'S  
NOT LOOKING  
GOOD FOR  
PODUNK!

BOM BOOM BOOM

ESPECIALLY  
SINCE THE ACID  
RAIN  
TYRANT SURPRISE HAS  
LEFT ONLY PODUNK  
WOUNDED!

CIRCLE  
TWIN...USE THE  
FORCE...OF THE  
BLASTS...

HOLY  
BAD WEEK!  
THE PARTS ARE BEING  
PROPELLED BY THE  
EXPLOSION...

5/5

...AND PODUNK  
WINS WITH A FIVE-  
POINT MURDER  
KNOCKOUT!

I  
GOT YOU,  
TRINI! TAKE  
THAT!

YAY...CIRCLE!  
HEY, WHAT'S  
YOUR...REAL  
NAME?

NOPE!

"MOM, DAD, WHAT IS THIS FEELING?"





THE DEAD-CITY DRILLS!

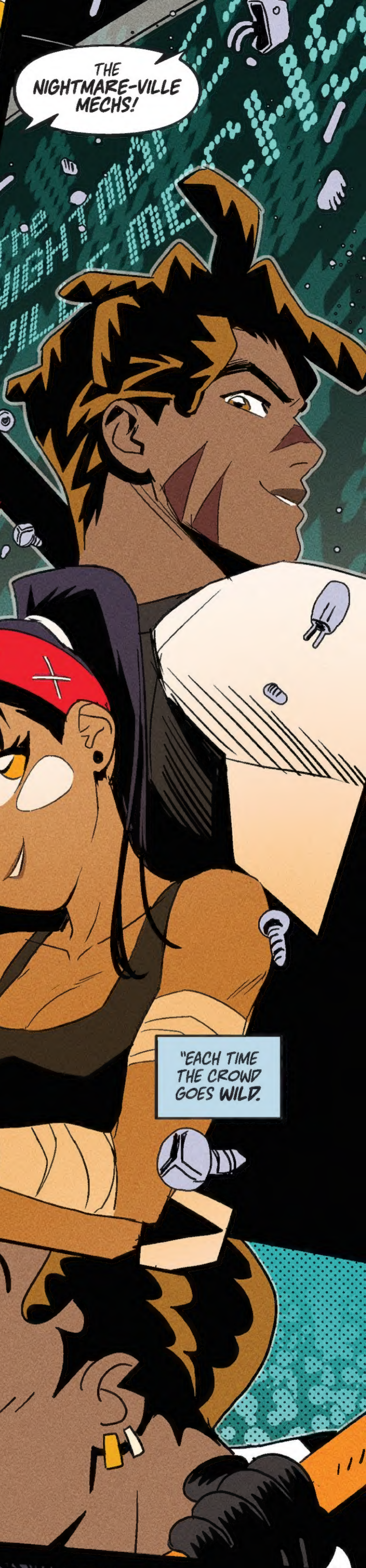
"IT'S LIKE LIGHTNING STRIKING MY HEART."

THE DEAD-CITY DRILLS



THE FOREVER-WAR WARRIORS!

"IT GROWS EACH TIME WE WIN."

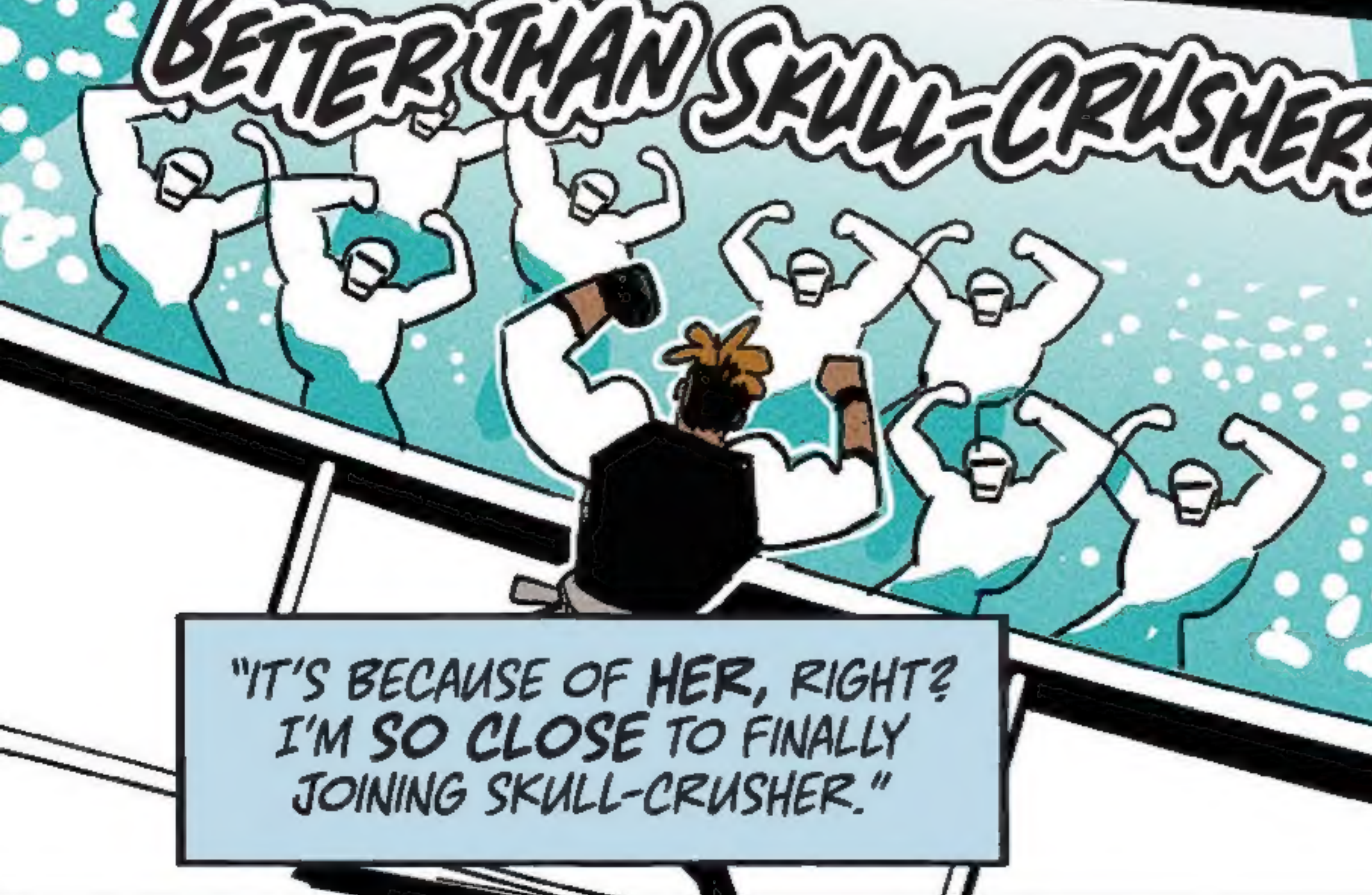


THE NIGHTMARE-VILLE MECHS!

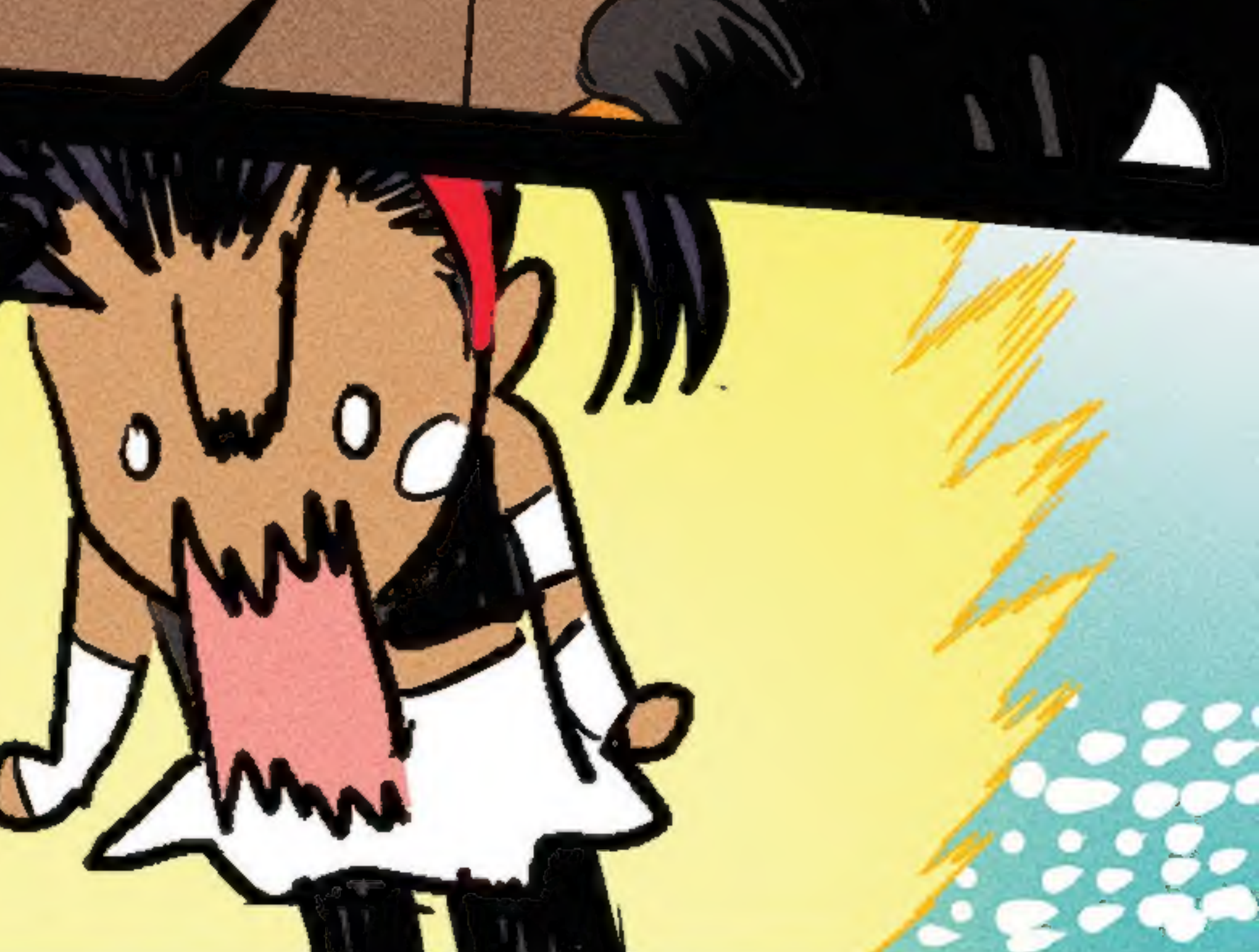
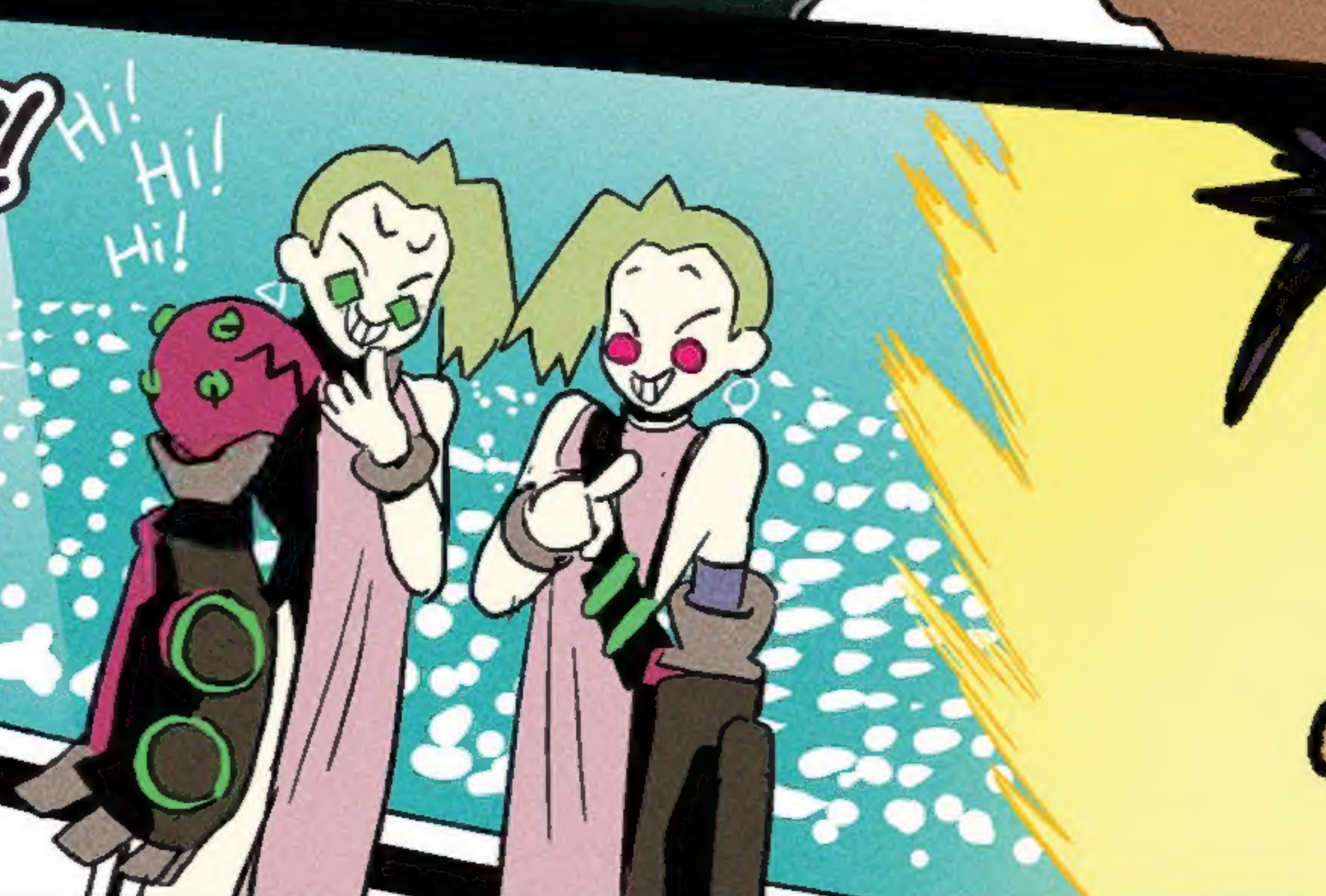
"EACH TIME THE CROWD GOES WILD."



"EACH STEP CLOSER TO MY DREAM."



"IT'S BECAUSE OF HER, RIGHT? I'M SO CLOSE TO FINALLY JOINING SKULL-CRUSHER."





"TO FINALLY ACHIEVING  
MY LIFELONG GOAL."

"THAT'S GOTTA  
BE IT...RIGHT?"

TOMORROW  
IS THE FINALS MATCH.  
WHOEVER WINS WILL GET TO  
JOIN SKULL-CRUSHER'S  
TEAM.

WHICH MEANS  
SKULL-CRUSHER  
WILL BE THERE!

PUSH  
HARDER!

MAYBE IF EVERYONE  
HELPED, WE'D GO  
FASTER.

I'M  
DELICATE.  
I'VE GIVEN UP  
DRINKING, AND  
GOTTA PRIORITIZE  
MY HEALTH.

REALLY?

YOU  
KNOW I DIDN'T  
HAVE A CHOICE.  
BESIDES...

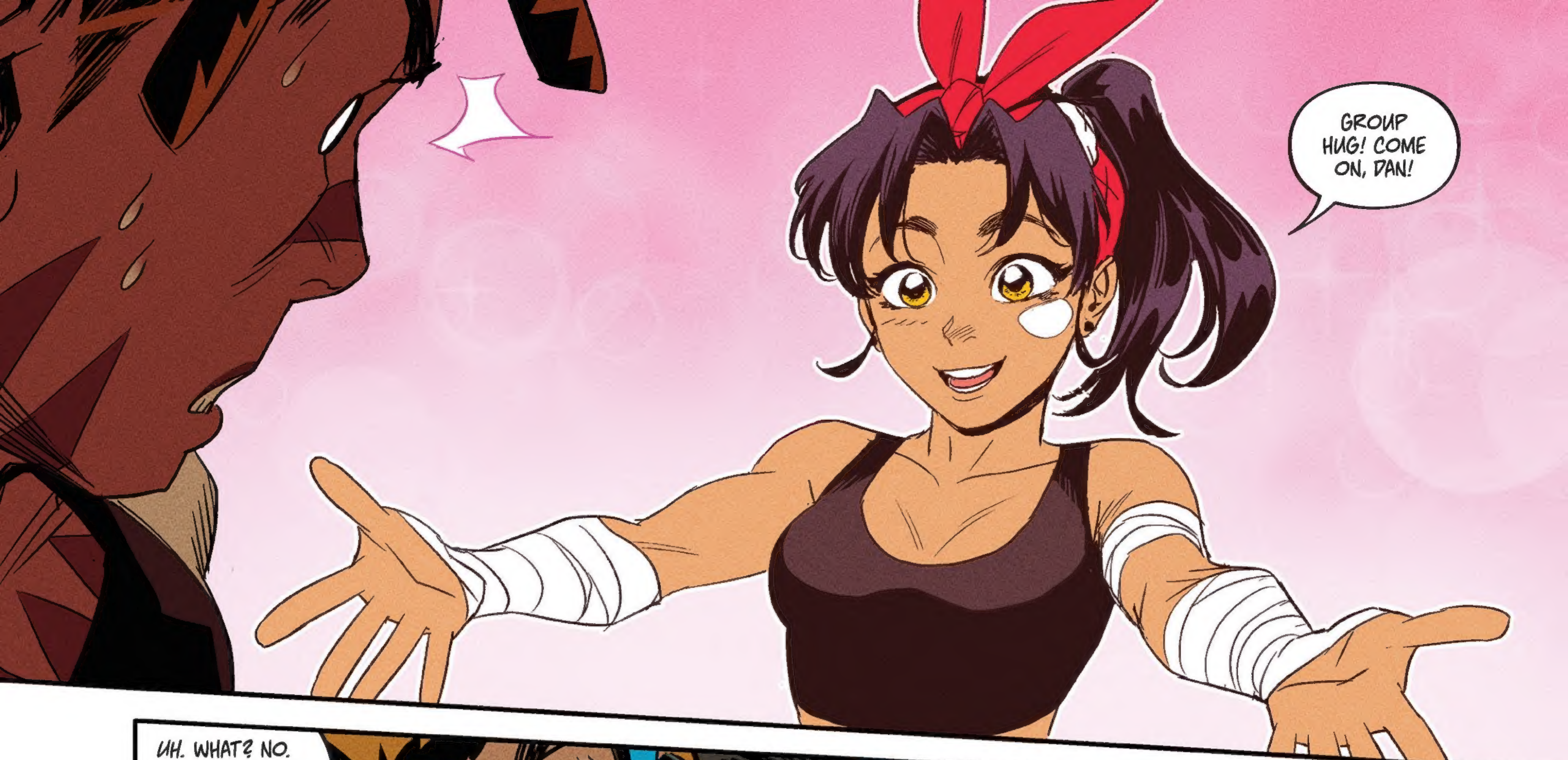
WE MIGHT  
JUST GET  
OUT OF THIS  
ALIVE.

COOOOAAAAACH!

OH  
GOD, WHY ARE  
YOU DOING  
THIS?

I TAKE  
IT ALL BACK!  
STOP IT!





GROUP  
HUG! COME  
ON, PAN!



UH. WHAT? NO.  
N-NUMBER ONE  
PLAYERS DON'T  
GROUP  
HUG.

LET'S  
JUST GET  
TO WHATEVER  
**TERRIBLE**  
TOWN FINALS  
ARE IN...

UHHHH...



LOOKS  
LIKE WE'RE...  
HERE...

WHOA.  
WHAT IS  
THAT?

A  
LAKE. YOU'RE  
LOOKING AT A  
LAKE.

WELCOME  
TO CRATER  
TOWN.





YOU KNOW THIS PLACE?

ONLY BY RUMOR.



IT'S ONE OF THE LAST LAKES AFTER THE BAD WEEK.

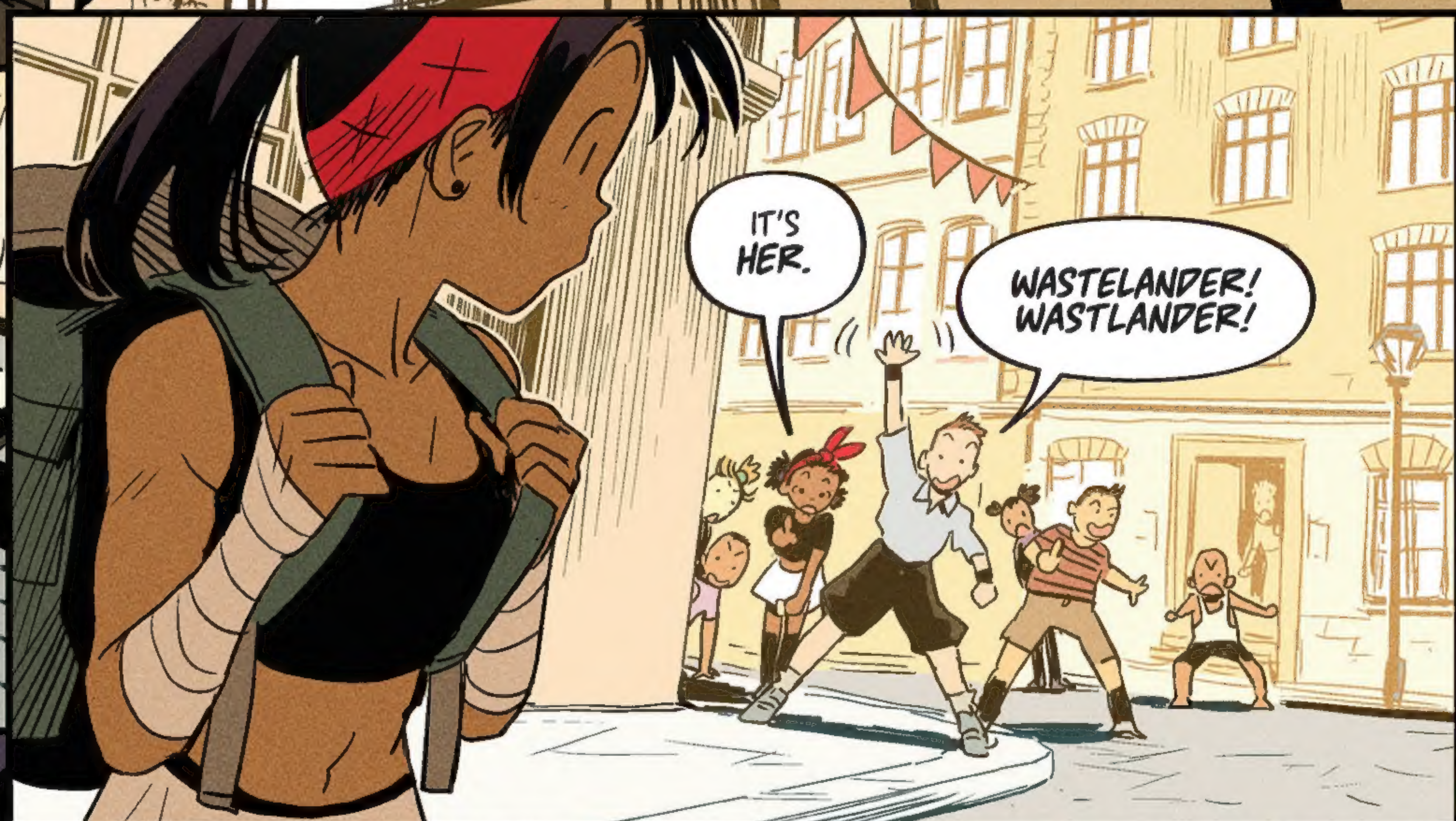
I'M SURPRISED IT'S STILL HERE.

YEAH. CRAZY THE MURDER WINDS HAVEN'T DESTROYED IT YET.



THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEANT.

WHOA.



IT'S HER.

WASTELANDER! WASTELANDER!



"MOM, DAD. THIS FEELING I HAVE INSIDE..."

"...IS THIS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO WIN?"

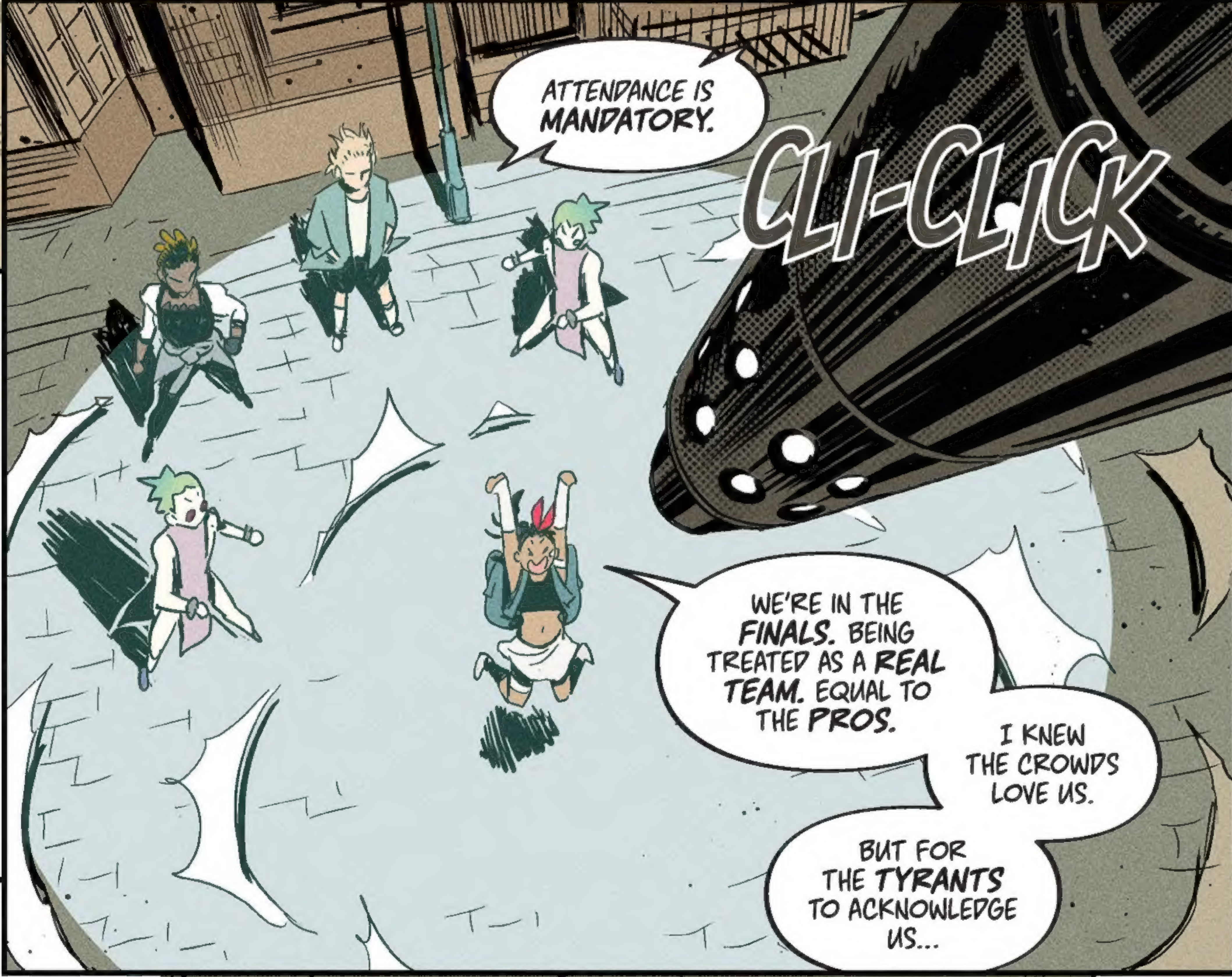


PODUNK TEAM! YOUR TIME HAS COME!





...AND BY THAT I MEAN YOU ARE INVITED BY OUR BELOVED TYRANTS TO THE FINALIST DINNER!



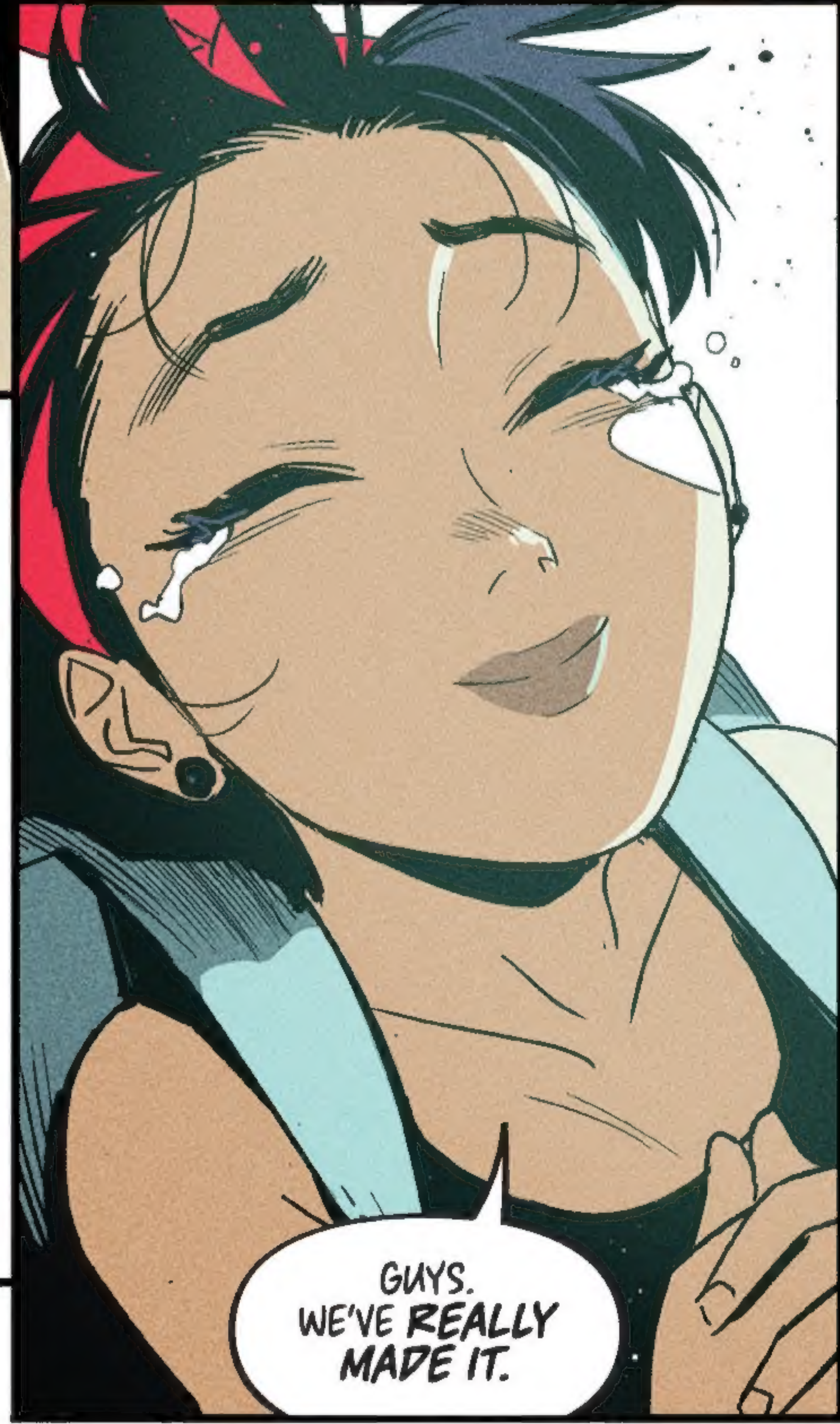
ATTENDANCE IS MANDATORY.

CLI-CLICK

WE'RE IN THE FINALS. BEING TREATED AS A REAL TEAM. EQUAL TO THE PROS.

I KNEW THE CROWDS LOVE US.

BUT FOR THE TYRANTS TO ACKNOWLEDGE US...



GUYS. WE'VE REALLY MADE IT.



...RIGHT?





SIX HOURS LATER. THE FINALIST DINNER.

COME ON. WHERE IS EVERYONE?



FINALLY!

T-TRINI...?



GREAT NEWS!

IT'S US INSTEAD!

WHERE'S TRINI?



OHhhh, WHERE'S TRINI?

A-AND COACH. COACH, TOO!

TRINI'S PROBABLY BEEN ARRESTED FOR TRYING TO STALK SKULL-CRUSHER.

AND COACH IS PROTESTING BECAUSE THEY WON'T LET DAVID IN.



THIS IS ANTI-MUTANT BEAR-MAN SENTIMENT!

IT'S JUST A BEAR!



NOW HERE'S THE PLAN. WE'VE ROBBED TYRANTS BEFORE. PICK A MARK...

KNOCK 'EM OUT...

...AND PROFIT.

NO!

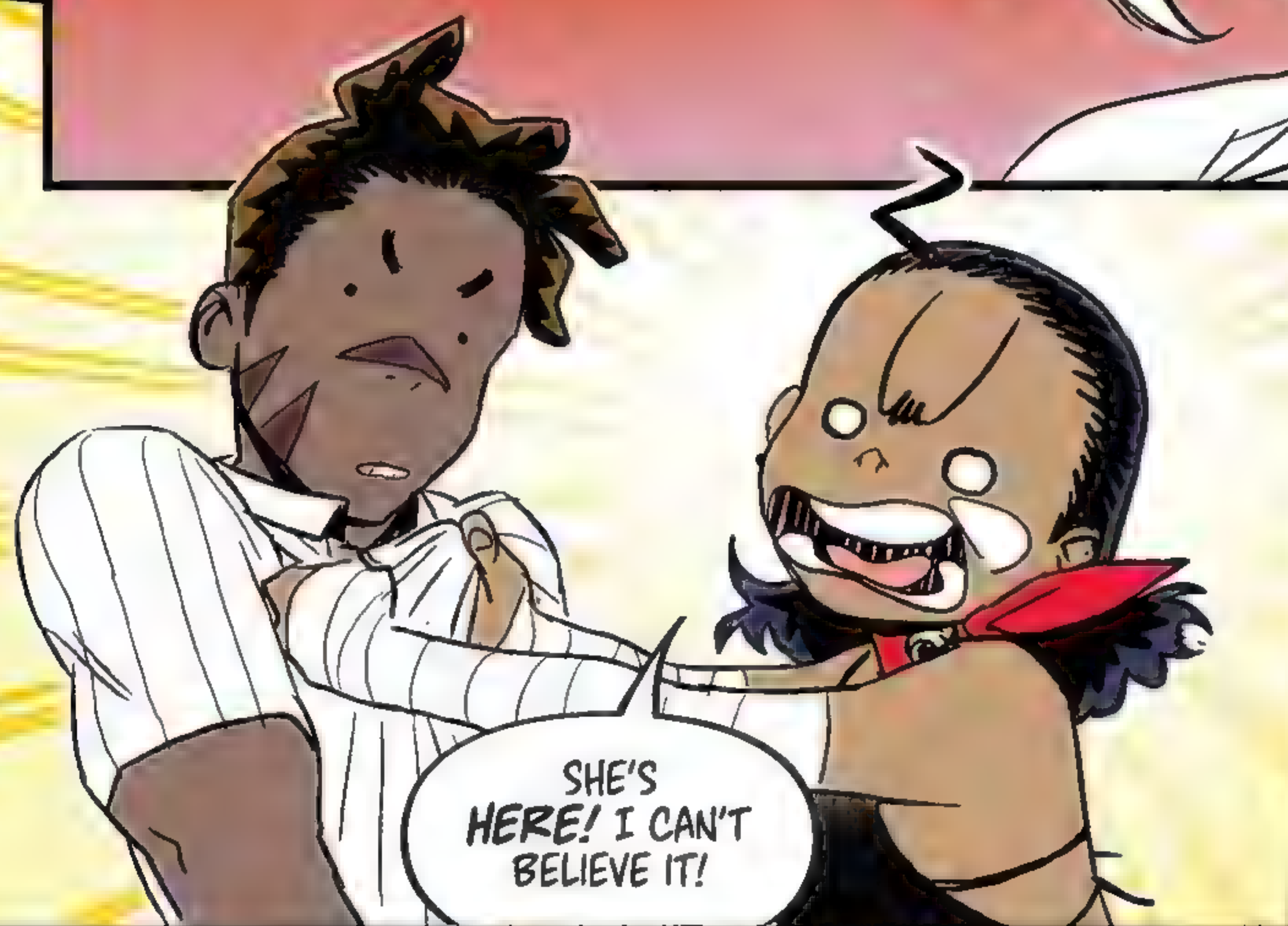








SKULL-CRUSHER!



SHE'S  
HERE! I CAN'T  
BELIEVE IT!



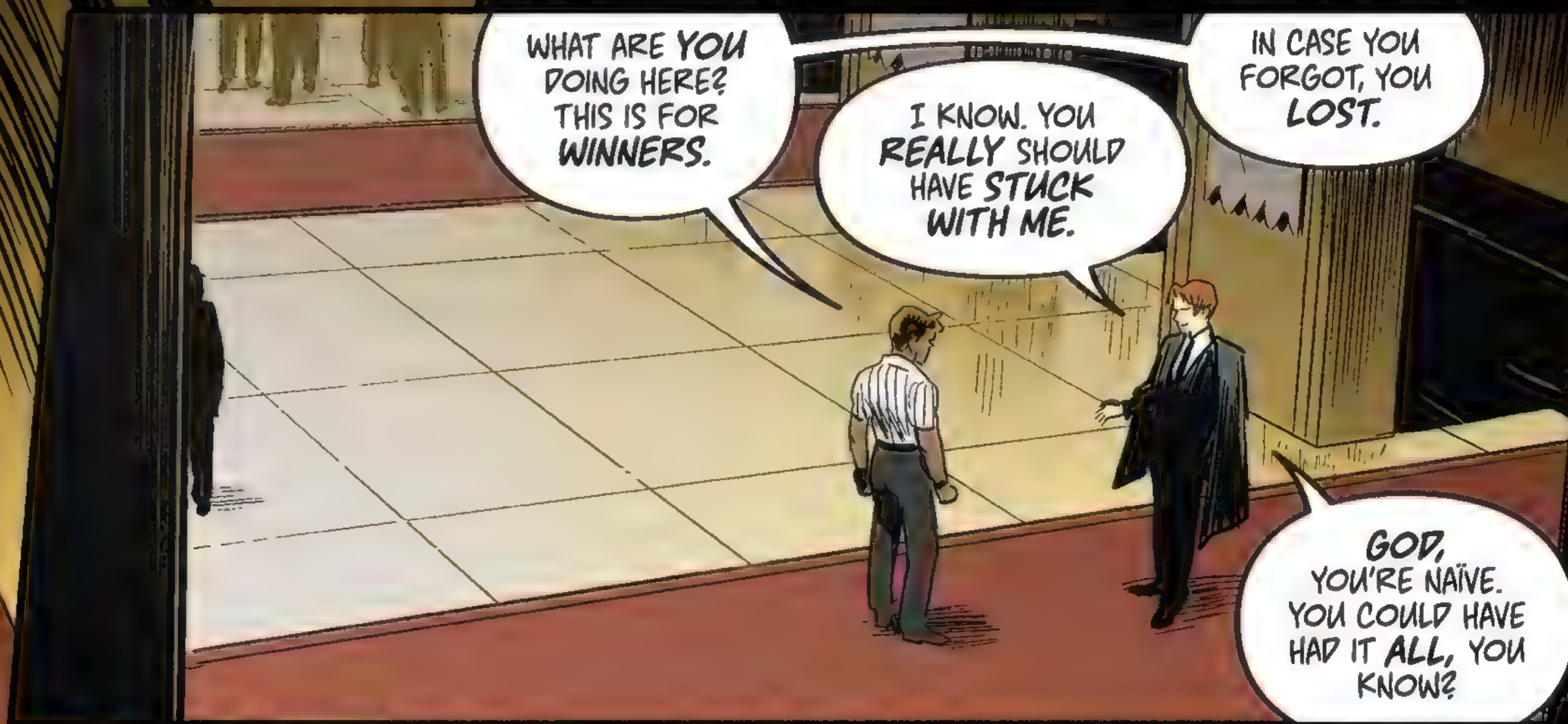
YEAH. CAN'T  
BELIEVE IT.

I HAVE  
TO TALK TO  
HER.

WOW.



I CAN'T  
BELIEVE YOU  
STILL THINK  
YOU'RE IN THE  
RUNNING.



WHAT ARE YOU  
DOING HERE?  
THIS IS FOR  
WINNERS.

I KNOW. YOU  
REALLY SHOULD  
HAVE STUCK  
WITH ME.

IN CASE YOU  
FORGOT, YOU  
LOST.

GOD,  
YOU'RE NAÏVE.  
YOU COULD HAVE  
HAD IT ALL, YOU  
KNOW?



YOU COULD HAVE  
HAD FAMILY.  
INSTEAD, YOU'VE BECOME  
AS STUPID AS YOUR  
BROTHER.



WHAT  
DID YOU  
SAY--



HISSESSSSSSSS...



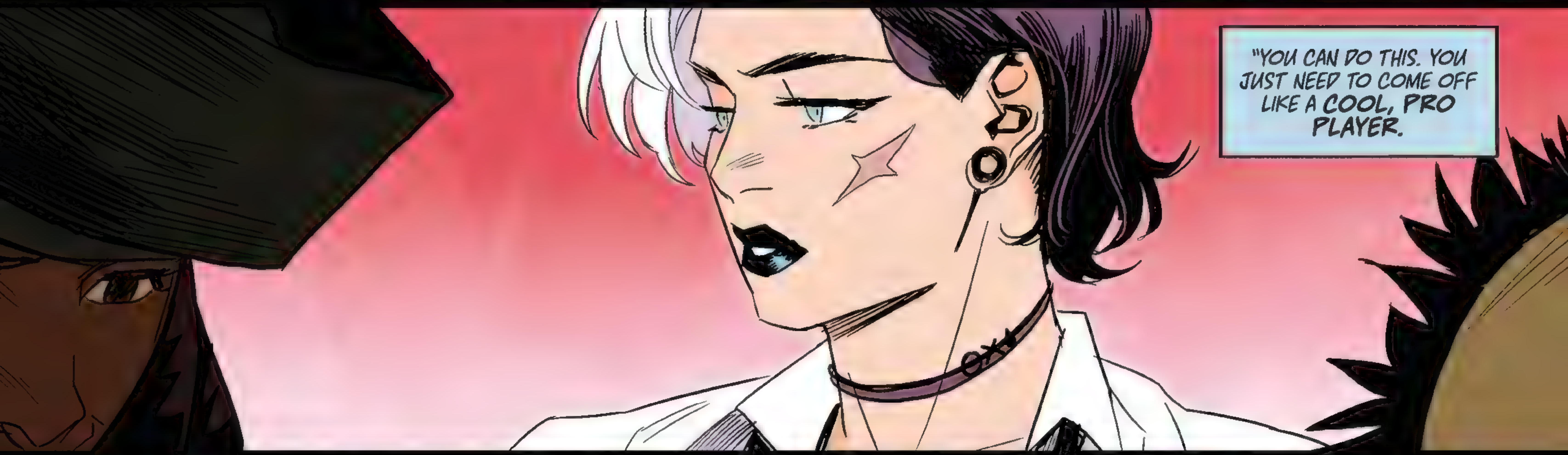
NOW WHILE  
I'M HAPPY TO  
JUST TALK, THE  
OTHER TEAMS  
HAVE BIGGER  
PLANS.

FINALS  
ARE TOMORROW...  
BUT THINNING THE  
COMPETITION  
STARTS NOW.

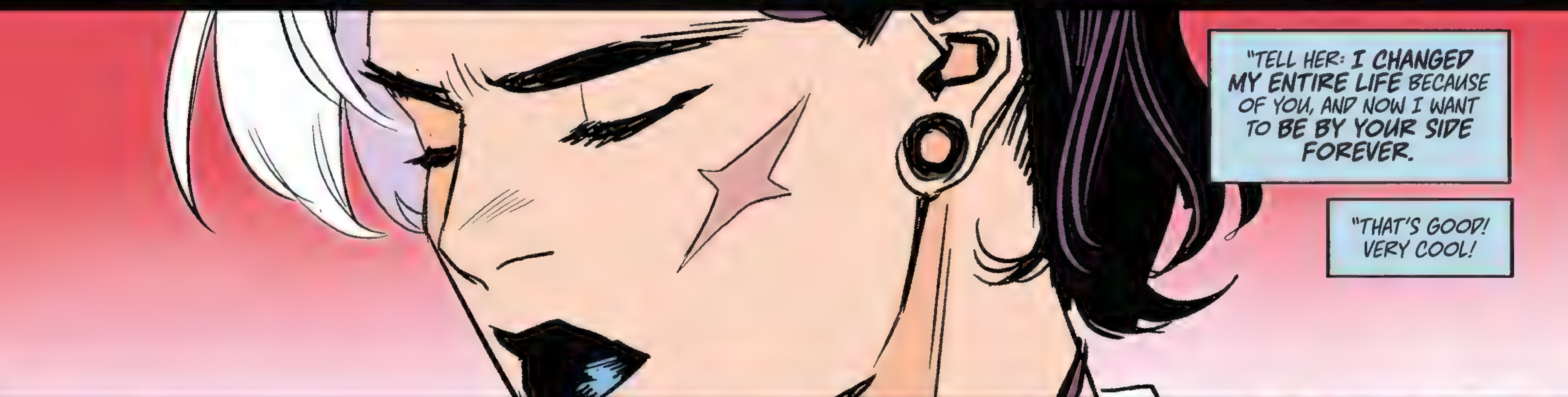




"IT'S HER. THREE FEET  
IN FRONT OF YOU."

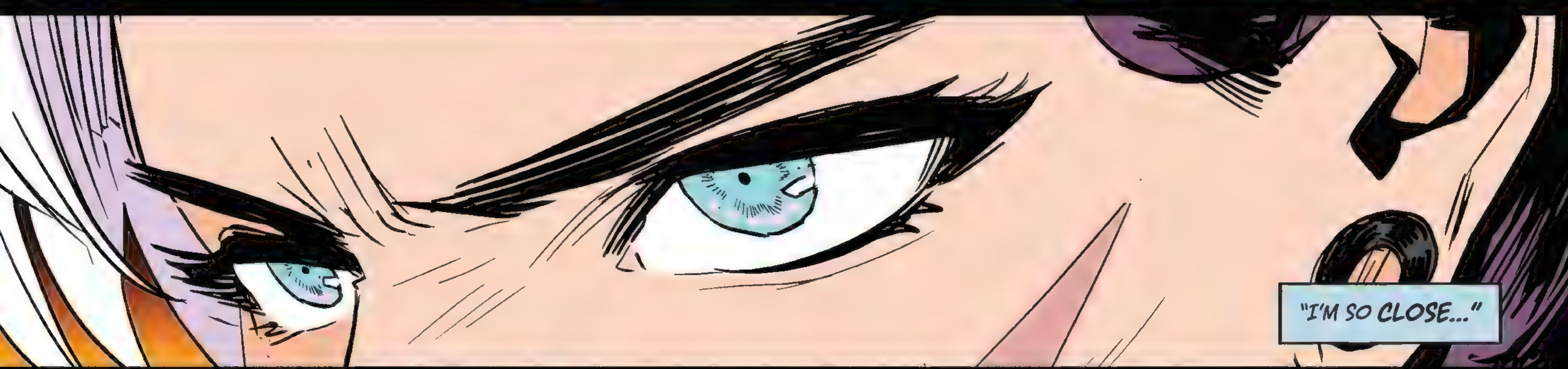


"YOU CAN DO THIS. YOU  
JUST NEED TO COME OFF  
LIKE A COOL, PRO  
PLAYER."



"TELL HER: I CHANGED  
MY ENTIRE LIFE BECAUSE  
OF YOU, AND NOW I WANT  
TO BE BY YOUR SIDE  
FOREVER."

"THAT'S GOOD!  
VERY COOL!"



"I'M SO CLOSE..."

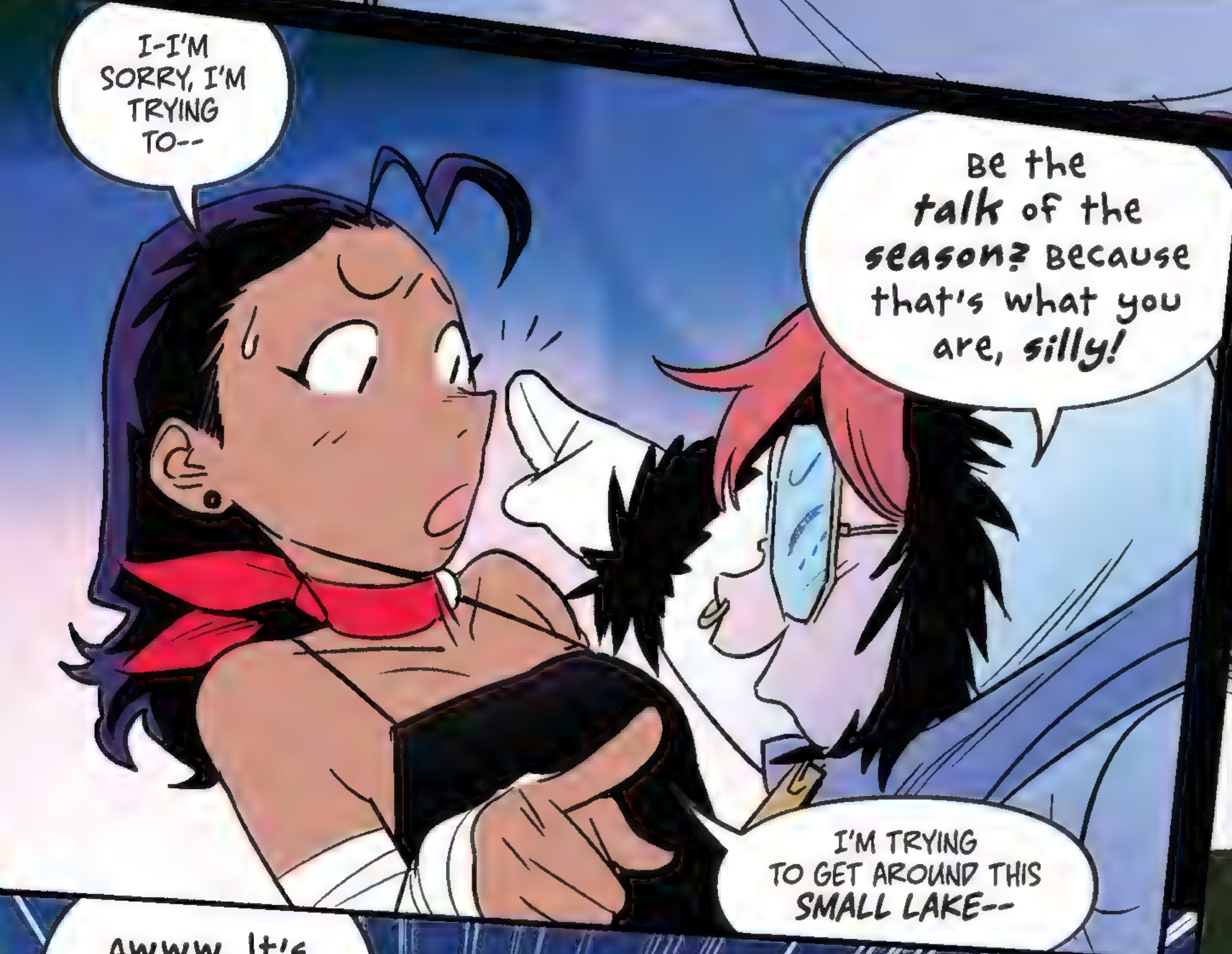


Aww, Trini  
Wastelander!





Congratulations  
on *getting*  
this far!



Be the  
talk of the  
season? Because  
that's what you  
are, silly!

I'M TRYING  
TO GET AROUND THIS  
SMALL LAKE--



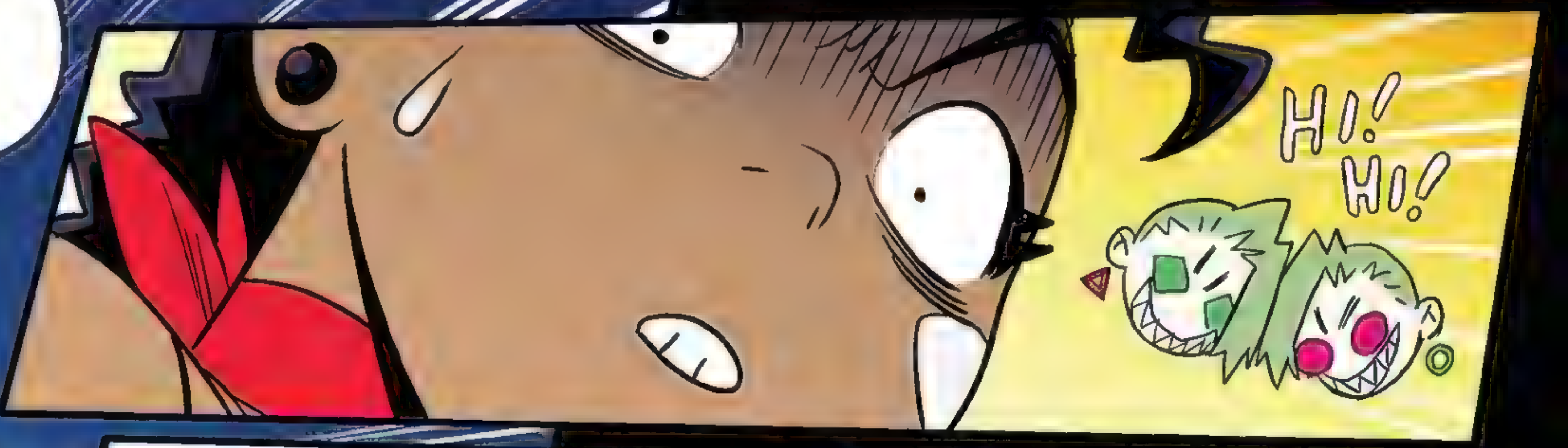
you mean  
the pool?  
HAHAAHAH!

Next, you'll  
tell me you don't  
know about  
ice!

UH...

Awww. It's  
alright. Just  
be a good  
girl...

...and  
drink  
up.



oh! silly  
me...

...I didn't think *hicks*  
would recognize *nuclear*  
*waste*.







WHY ARE YOU...?

Let's do the **math**. Training, having a team, that takes **money**. Gallons of it.

The Tyrants **pay for all of it**. And we do it to look good in **Mob's eyes**. To rise in status under her rule.

Then she announces she wants **you dead**. Easy-peasy, right?

Except you **survive** our **tyrant surprises**. You beat our teams. Making us look like **fools**.

Where do you think that money **comes from**?

They end...

You're a scrappy lil' underdog, Trini Wastelander!

But here's the thing about **underdog stories**.

...when there's **no more** underdogs.

AHHHH!

GRAB





DAN?

WE HAVE  
TO WARN THE  
OTHERS! THE  
TYRANTS  
ARE...

TRYING TO  
**MURDER US?**  
I FIGURED IT OUT  
WHEN THEY SICCED  
**MUTANTS**  
ON ME.

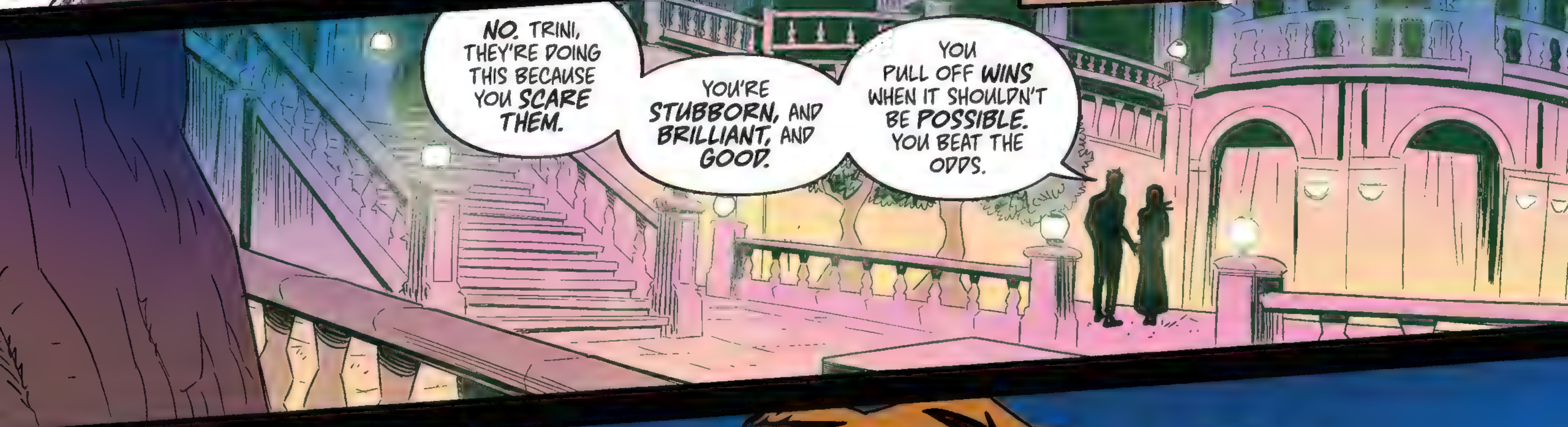
I SAW THE  
**TWINS** ESCAPE A  
**TYRANT** MAKING THEM  
WALK THE PLANK  
INTO ACID. WE NEED  
TO GO--

IT HAS  
TO MATTER  
TO HER,  
RIGHT?

WE WON.  
THE CROWD  
**CHEERED**. WE  
PLAYED **BETTER**  
THAN ANYONE TO  
GET HERE.

ISN'T THAT  
SUPPOSED TO  
**MATTER?**

WAS  
ALL OF  
THIS...FOR  
**NOTHING?**



NO. TRINI,  
THEY'RE DOING  
THIS BECAUSE  
YOU **SCARE**  
THEM.

YOU'RE  
**STUBBORN**, AND  
**BRILLIANT**, AND  
**GOOD**.

YOU  
PULL OFF **WINS**  
WHEN IT SHOULDN'T  
BE **POSSIBLE**.  
YOU BEAT THE  
ODDS.



YOU ARE  
THE MOST AMAZING  
WOMAN IN THE  
WORLD.



A-AND...  
AND...

THIS FEELING...





...LIKE LIGHTNING.



WAIT--!

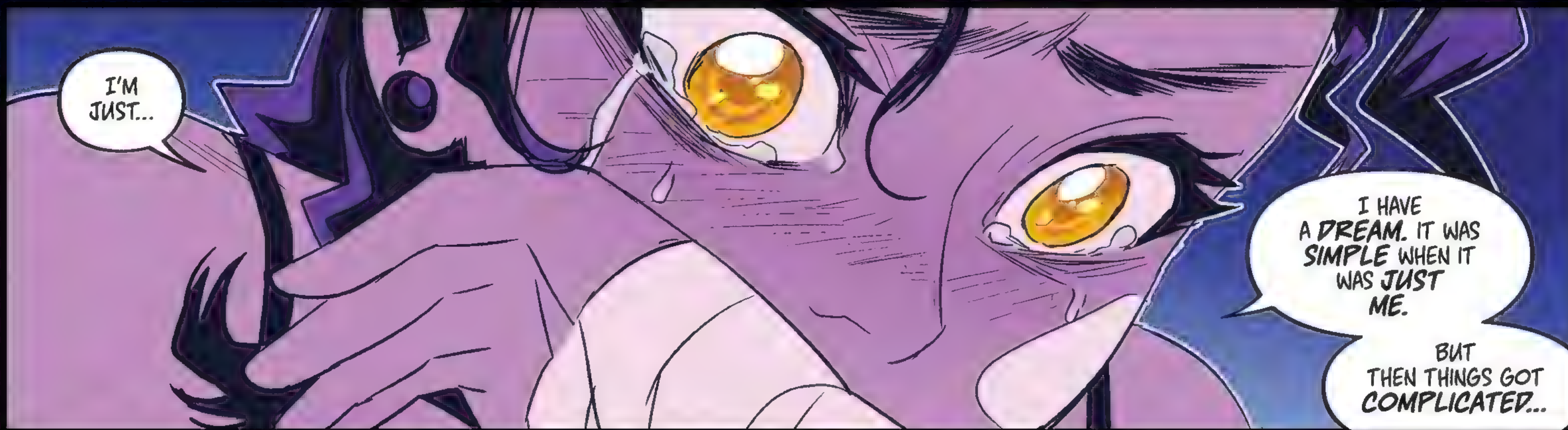
PANT

PANT

TEARS. AT  
A TYRANT'S  
BALL.

REVEALING YOUR  
TRUE FEELINGS  
IS NEVER A GOOD  
IDEA AMONG  
THEM.

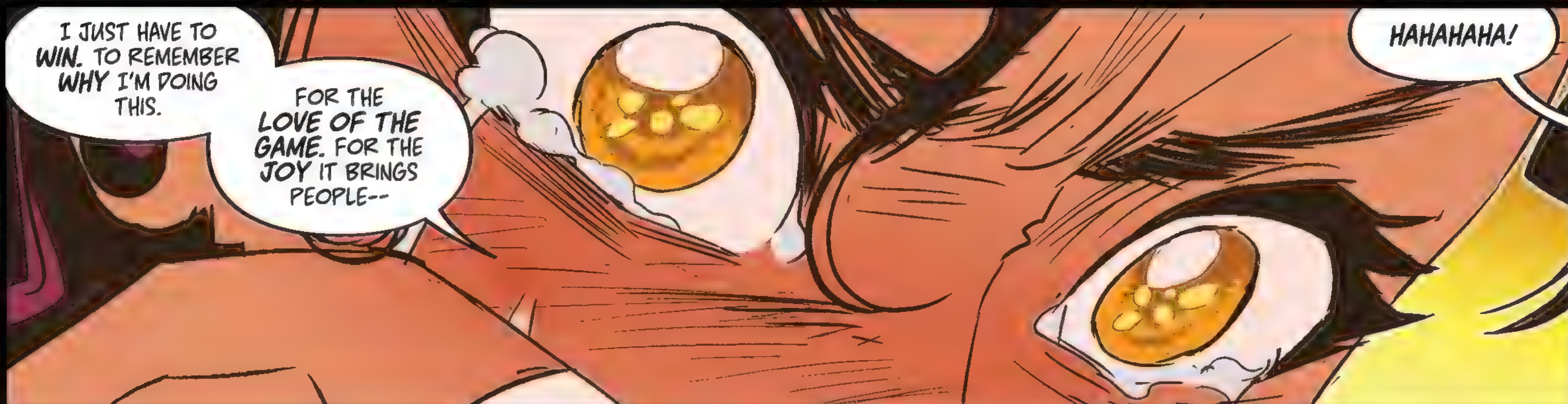




I'M JUST...

I HAVE A DREAM. IT WAS SIMPLE WHEN IT WAS JUST ME.

BUT THEN THINGS GOT COMPLICATED...



I JUST HAVE TO WIN. TO REMEMBER WHY I'M DOING THIS.

FOR THE LOVE OF THE GAME. FOR THE JOY IT BRINGS PEOPLE--

HAHAHAHA!



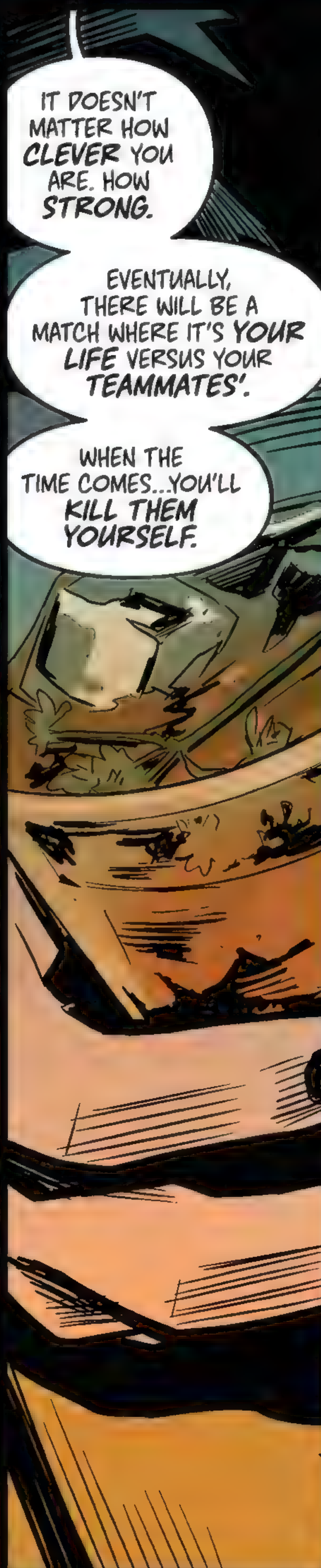
THE GAME IS NOT FOR YOU. IT'S NOT FOR THE CROWDS.

IT'S FOR THE ONES HOLDING THE PUPPET STRINGS.



FOR THEM TO LAUGH AND JOCKEY FOR POWER.

TO BET HOW FAST PEOPLE WILL TURN ON EACH OTHER.



IT DOESN'T MATTER HOW CLEVER YOU ARE. HOW STRONG.

EVENTUALLY, THERE WILL BE A MATCH WHERE IT'S YOUR LIFE VERSUS YOUR TEAMMATES'.

WHEN THE TIME COMES...YOU'LL KILL THEM YOURSELF.



N-NO... THAT'S NOT TRUE...

THEN WHY ARE YOU CRYING?





WHY DID I BOTHER...?

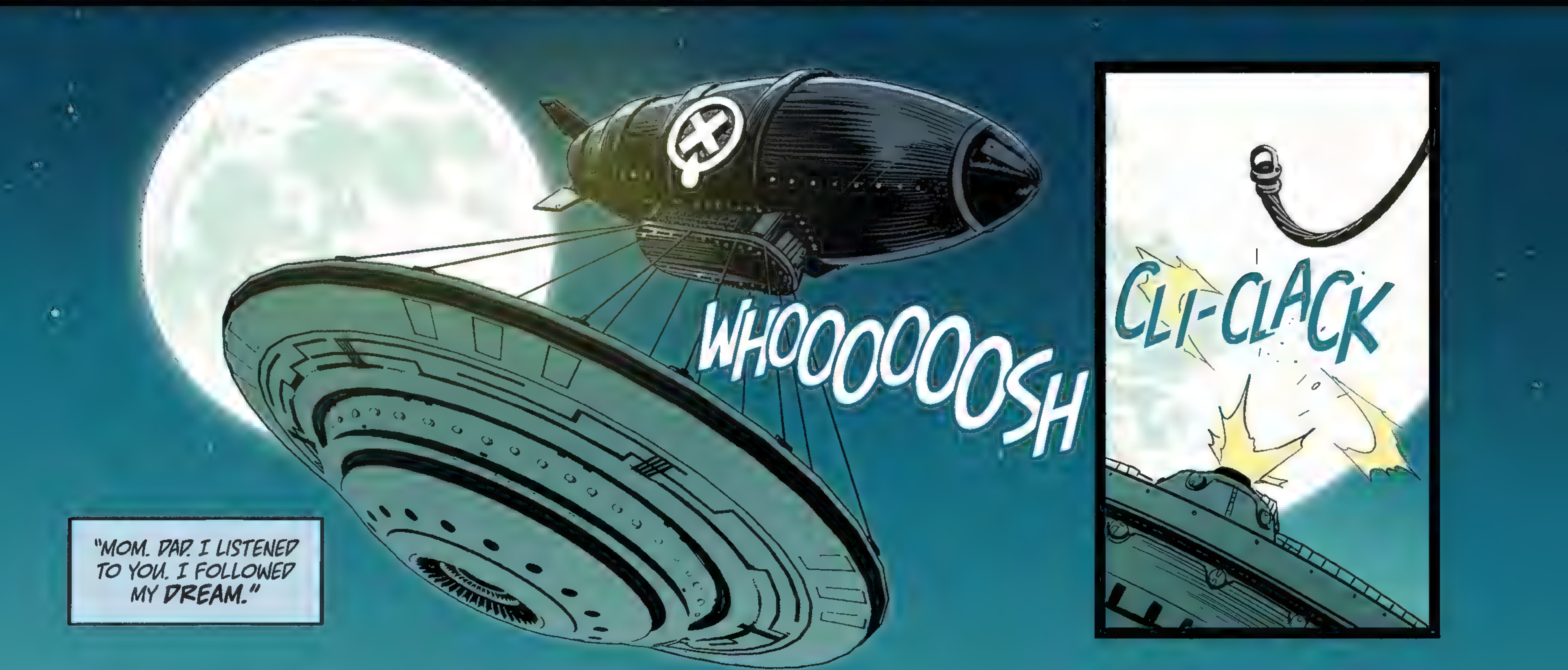


UGH. WHO CARES?



"THAT GIRL IS GOING TO DIE TOMORROW."

WHIRRR WHIRRR



"MOM. DAD. I LISTENED TO YOU. I FOLLOWED MY DREAM."

WHOOOOOOSH



CLACK-CLACK



"IS THIS HOW DREAMS  
ARE SUPPOSED TO GO?"



"THIS DOESN'T FEEL  
LIKE WINNING."





IT'S THE  
MOMENT YOU'VE  
BEEN WAITING  
FOR.

BUT THIS  
WOULDN'T BE  
THE BEAUTIFUL,  
BLOODY GAME  
IF WE STUCK  
TO THE SAME  
ROUTINE!

THE FIVE  
FINAL TEAMS  
ARE HERE TO  
COMPLETE.

QUEEN  
MOB!

WHOOSH

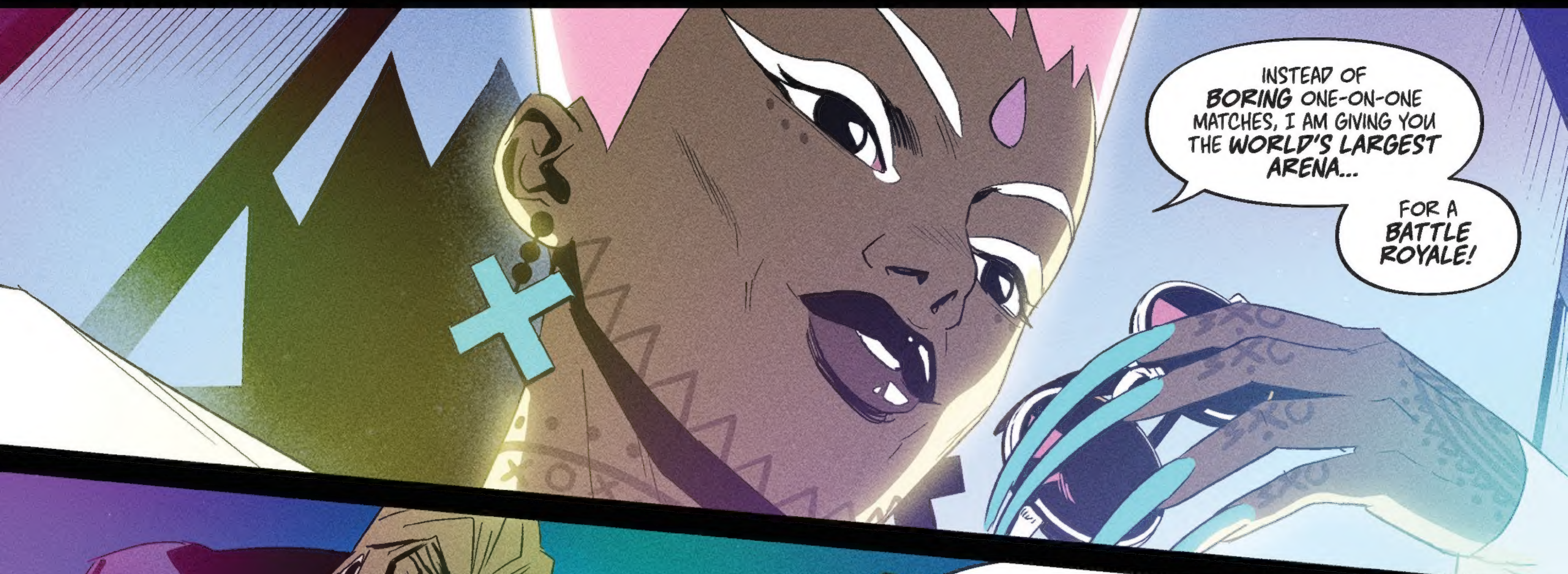
I GIVE YOU  
THE ARCHITECT  
OF TODAY'S LAST  
MATCH.

YOUR  
LOVELY  
OPPRESSOR  
AND MINE...

AMERICAN  
CITIZENS OF THE  
WASTE...

...BOY,  
DO I HAVE A  
FINALE FOR  
YOU!





INSTEAD OF BORING ONE-ON-ONE MATCHES, I AM GIVING YOU THE WORLD'S LARGEST ARENA...

FOR A BATTLE ROYALE!



MY TYRANTS HAVE FAILED TO GIVE ME A TYRANT SURPRISE THAT TRULY AMUSES ME.

WHICH IS WHY I GAVE THE TASK OF COMING UP WITH TODAY'S TYRANT SURPRISE TO...



MY SON AND HEIR.



HE CAN'T BE. SHE WOULD HAVE TOLD ME IF HE WAS... NO.

IS THAT WHAT HE MEANT?

DAN?



AHHH!

SIBLING!

YOU HEARD THE DREAD OVERLADY!

LET THE BLOODBATH BEGIN!





WHAT IS THAT?

AS FOR THE EXTRA SPECIAL TYRANT'S SURPRISE, WE'VE GOT A TREAT FOR YOU!

...I KNOW THAT BLUDGEONING PATTERN.

QUEEN MOB'S RULES SAY SHE CAN MURDER ANYONE AT ANYTIME.

15 WORLD CHAMPIONSHIPS. NOW 160 KILLS...

...SKULL-CRUSHER IS IN PLAY!

You read that right. Trini must go head-to-head with her IDOL...who is trying to KILL HER!  
Don't miss our DEADLY FINALE as the first arc comes to a bloody end in  
the next issue of **I HEART SKULL-CRUSHER!**



***I HEART SKULL-CRUSHER! #5***  
***ON SALE JULY 2024***

